

THE 'TEACHERS' OF MANI IN THE *ACTA ARCHELAI* AND SIMON MAGUS¹

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to prove that the biography of Mani in the *Acta Archelae* of Hegemonius, which contains a great number of completely fictitious elements, was in fact drawn up on the file of Simon Magus, *pater omnium haereticorum*, using the works of heresiologists and the apocryphal acts, especially the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones*, as a model and source. There are a great number of elements in this *Vita Manis* that bear a strong resemblance to the well known motives of Simon's life. Projecting Simon's life over that of Mani serves as tool to reinforce the image of Mani that Hegemonius tried to convey: that of just another 'run of the mill' heretic, one in the long line of the disciples of Simon, and a fraud and devoid of any originality.

The *Acta Archelai* of Hegemonius,² composed between 330 and 348 in Syria,³ was the first Christian work written against Manichaeans. The text of the *Acta*, as a whole, has survived only in the Latin translation, though a great part of its Greek text has been preserved in the *Panarion* (or 'Medicine Chest') of Epiphanius, who seems to have often copied his source almost word for word in the chapter on Manichaeism.⁴ Besides being the first it was also, in many respects, the most influential. It was a source of material, both on Manichaean mythology and on the figure of Mani, for a long list of historians and theologians who engaged in polemics against the

¹ I express my thanks to Professor J. van Oort for his advice and for providing me access to his library. I also thank Dr. B. Schoemacher for his valuable comments.

² The authorship of Hegemonius was ascertained by Charles Henry Beeson in his critical edition of the work: *Acta Disputationis Archelai*, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte (GCS) 16 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs' sche Buchhandlung, 1906). For an English translation see Mark Vermes, *Hegemonius, Acta Archelai*, with a commentary by Samuel Lieu, Manichaean Studies, 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001).

³ Samuel Lieu, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East*, (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 136.

⁴ Since the text of the *Acta* sometimes appears to be corrupt, the text of Epiphanius can also provide help in trying to reconstruct the original sense of some of the more obscure sentences.

Manichaeans, like Epiphanius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Socrates the Church historian, Theodoret of Cyrus, Theodore bar Koni, the *Chronicon Maroniticum* and finally even Petrus Siculus and Photius who wrote against the Paulicians,⁵ and even the Anathema formulas, the *Seven Chapters against the Manichaeans* of Zacharias of Mitylene, and through it the Greek *Long Formula*.⁶ These authors and the content of their works practically constitute an independent line of tradition in anti-Manichaean Christian writings.

The *Acta Archelai* is the account of two public debates between the here-siarch Mani and the bishop of Carchar, Archelaus. The debate was occasioned by Mani's attempt to convert the noble citizen of Carchar, Marcellus, to his own teachings. It starts with the meritorious deeds of Marcellus, whose fame reaches even Mani in the lands of the Persians. He sends a letter to Marcellus exhorting him to join the faith founded by him. This imprudence incenses Archelaus, Marcellus' friend, who invites the author of the letter to a theological contest. Prior to the arrival of Mani we are given a—rather ridiculed—account of Manichaean mythology. When Mani arrives he is easily defeated in the debate by Archelaus, takes flight and runs to Diodorus, where he hopes to find proselytes for his religion among the unsuspecting population. However, the presbyter of the town, also called Diodorus, immediately sees through his designs and sends to Archelaus for help. Archelaus promptly, and unexpectedly, appears again and duly defeats Mani in the second debate as well. After Mani flees again, Archelaus makes his victory over Mani complete by telling the assembled audience the “true origins” of both Mani and his teachings.

The work basically consists of three parts: the theological refutation of Mani's system, the account—and simultaneously refutation—of his mythology and teachings, and the “biography” of Mani (plus the introductory part, that tell us of Marcellus' acts). Of these three parts the last one, the biography (c. 61-66) achieved the greatest “career”, appearing in many other heresiological works, profoundly influencing the image of Mani in Christian literature till the nineteenth century.⁷ This bibliography serves

⁵ H-Ch. Puech *Le Manichéisme*. (Paris: Civilisations du Sud, 1949), 99. N.10. This list comprises only extant works. Socrates mentions, as authors utilising the *Acta Archelai*, Diodorus Cilicensis, Georgius Laodiceus and Eusebius.

⁶ Lieu, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia*, 224-5.

⁷ That is to say until the section on Manichaeism in the *Kitab al-Fihrist* of an-Nadim, in Gustave Flügel, *Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften* (Leipzig, 1862), and the *Liber Scholiorum* of Theodore bar Koni, in H. Pognon, “Liber Scholiorum de Theodore bar Khoni”

the same end as the whole work itself: to discredit Mani and show him up as a fraud and pseudo-prophet, and his religion on a par with all the other heresies of the age, anathematized and thoroughly refuted.⁸

Mani's life and acts, as presented by Hegemonius, fit neatly into the tradition of anti-heretical writings as it developed through the centuries during the incessant fight of the Church against heretics.⁹ In the "biographical deeds" that are used to depict Mani we meet with numerous classical motifs of antiheretical literature. For Hegemonius Mani was just one in the long list of heretics, as he himself does not hesitate to declare on several occasions. Accordingly all the basic ingredients of anti-heretical polemics are represented in the *vita*: the motifs of false Christianity, taking the name of Christ, plagiarism, compiling their system from all sources after the fashion of patchwork, hunger for power and attempts to trick and corrupt the mind of simple men. In Hegemonius' account Mani starts his religious career as a heresiarch by stealing from Scythianus, that is, taking his book¹⁰ and after inserting his own ideas in it, which resemble some old wives' tales, and deleting the name of their earlier owner. He continues by "stealing" from Christianity, plagiarising from the Scriptures, bits of which he then combined with the books of Scythianus and whatever phantasmagorias sprang from his distorted mind.¹¹ Finally Mani is also accused of not only pretending to be a Christian, but also calling himself the Apostle of Christ and the Paraclete, partly out of ignorant vanity, but mostly with the aim of misleading people.

These 'incidents' of Mani's life in fact constitute an attack on an ideological level against Mani's religious system and correspond to Archelaus' accusations during the earlier theological dispute. The ingenuity of Hegemonius lies in the fact that this ideological attack is realized not so much through open statements as to the execrable nature of the heresy (as in

Inscriptions Mandaites des coupes de Khouabir (Paris: 1898) were published, the *Acta* was the sole known account of Mani's life in the Christian world.

⁸ Puech calls it a "caricature" and "contre légende" (*Le Manichéisme*, 24).

⁹ On the traditions and tools of heresiological literature, see A. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, II^e-III^e siècles* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985).

¹⁰ Which, in its turn, was based on the teachings of Pythagoras. Heretics stealing their ideas from the pagan philosophers is another commonplace accusation; see Le Boulluec, *La notion* vol. I, "Le plagiat des hérétiques," 123-4.

¹¹ The traditional nature of this accusation is appreciated even by Hegemonius: he makes Diodorus write to Archelaus: *Nosti quia morem hunc habent qui dogma aliquod adserere volunt, ut quaecumque voluerint de scripturis adsumere, haec propensius sui intelligentia depravent.* Hegemonius, 44.5 GCS 16.64.27-9.

“regular” anti-heretical writings), but through “biographical” elements that convey the same message. As if the attack on this ideological level were not enough, Hegemonius adds a number of other biographical elements that present Mani as a slave and failed miracle worker, who finally ends his life as a criminal, in a way that is absurd and humiliating at the same time.¹²

It must also be mentioned that all these motifs have a grain of truth in them: some of them are based on real facts from Mani’s life,¹³ but so distorted as to present a completely inverted image of Mani, while some others reflect the way Mani saw his own mission and religious message¹⁴—the way a Christian would have interpreted this, of course.¹⁵

There is only one curious motif, or rather group of motifs, which is hard to fit into the tradition of antiheretical writings, and which, furthermore, can in no way have any factual basis: the detailed and completely false biographies of Mani’s predecessors, who appear as the “founders”, or “real authors” of his religious system. The first of these forerunners, Scythianus is said by the *Acta* to have lived in the time of the Apostles—a sheer chronological impossibility, considering that Mani was born in 216 AD. No even remotely similar statement can be found in the Manichaean writings or even in Christian writings not based on the *Acta*, among them the numerous anti-Manichaean works of Augustine, a former Manichaean himself. In all other writings Mani clearly appears as the sole source of his ideology.¹⁶

¹² As Puech writes, the aim of this polemic piece of writing was to paint the image of Mani in the possible most dire colours, to make ridicule of an adversary who appears as “un esclave, un plagiaire, un imposteur, un criminel” *Le Manichéisme*, 24.

¹³ E.g. His activity as a “doctor”, the enmity of I. Bahram toward him, or his imprisonment at the order of the shah. For a detailed analysis of Mani’s life, see L. J. R. Ort, *Mani: A Religio-Historical Description of his Personality*. Leiden: Brill, 1967.

¹⁴ That is, his attempts to found a universal religion, his use of Christian scriptures, belief to be the last one in the line of Apostles of Light, and seeing Jesus as his forerunner could easily be open to such interpretation.

¹⁵ We may safely assume that Hegemonius drew his caricature upon a “Manichaean biography or hagiography,” see Puech, *Le Manichéisme*, 26, and Lieu, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia*, 151-52.

¹⁶ Even some of the authors who used the *Acta*—but had other sources as well—spurn this version. Theodore of Cyrus, who relied on the *Acta*, but evidently had access to other channels of information as well, even takes a short cut, and solves this problem by declaring, in his very first sentence, that Scythianus was just the original name of Mani. “Mani, of Persian origin, as they say, bore the yoke of servitude for long, and was called Scythianus while a slave.” Theodoretos Cyrensis, *Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium* I. 26, Patrologia Graeca (PG) 83.378.

How are we to interpret Hegemonius' claim that Mani was not the author of his own religion? What can we do with the figure of his alleged teachers, Scythianus and Terebinthus, and the detailed account of their life, acts and death that Hegemonius presents us with? Evidently this is one further device to make Mani even more ludicrous by depriving him of any originality, and showing him up as the thief of another thief. But if the image of a "double plagiarist" was all Hegemonius wanted to achieve, he seems to have put a disproportionate amount of energy into detailing the curious lives of Mani's forerunners. We must seek the clue of this puzzle by looking at the traditions of heresiological literature that, as we have seen, lies behind the drawing of Mani's figure in the *Acta*.

Simon Magus and the Traditions of Anti-Heretical Literature

Our first clue toward solving this perplexing question is the expression *tempore apostolorum*, in the time of the Apostles, when Mani's spiritual ancestor, the first and real author of this dualist system pursued his activities. The expression "time of the Apostles" immediately calls to mind the notion of Apostolic tradition, which linked the Church of the day to Christ, and justified the validity of its teaching.¹⁷ The notion of apostolic succession served not only to prove the authority of the Catholic Church and its direct descent from Christ, but also to refute any new teachings and reject secret traditions.¹⁸ This notion soon led to a further development: the notion of "demonic succession".¹⁹ Just as the Apostolic Church could be traced back to one source, Christ, forming a continuous link between Christ and the present Church, so its counterpart, the 'deviant Church' or community of heretics could also be traced back to one source: Simon Magus of Samaria.

Simon's figure first appears in the Biblical *Acts of the Apostles*, and soon a whole apocryphal and anti-heretical literary corpus developed around his figure. While in the apocryphal works we can read about the life of Simon,

¹⁷ The ideology behind this idea is closely connected to the threat posed by heresies. see Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* 41-2. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).

¹⁸ Archelaus himself refers to this Apostolic succession, as opposed to the "doctrine of error" represented and propagated by Mani (c. 61). On the contrast drawn between "la succession apostolique" and "la filerie de l'erreur", see Scopello, "Vérités et Contre-Vérités: La vie de Mani" 209-11 *Apocrypha* 6 (1995): 203-34.

¹⁹ On the notion of "succession" see Le Boulluec, *La notion*, 84-91.

his magical arts and nefarious deeds and about his debates with Peter and Paul, the Church Fathers concentrated on refuting his system and his dualist ideology. Besides attributing to him a complicated Gnostic system of thought and a Gnostic creation myth, the Church Fathers added further interesting information about the figure of Simon. They made him not just the first Gnostic, but the father of all heretics, the ultimate source of all heresies professing dualist ideas, the first link in the chain of demonic succession.

The idea that Simon was not only the first heretic, but the source of all other heresies as well, and the revolutionary notion of a master-disciple relationship may have first appeared in the, sadly lost, *Syntagma* of Justin, the first collection of heretical doctrines.²⁰ The first Church Father to call Simon explicitly the father of all heresies, *pater omnium haereticorum*, is Irenaeus,²¹ perhaps following Justin, in his *Adversus Haereses*. Irenaeus asserts that “all heretics drew their impious doctrines from Simon,”²² and “all those who in any way corrupt the truth and hurt the glory of the Church, are the disciples and successors of Simon Magus.”²³ This sentiment is often repeated by Irenaeus in his work. Other writers followed suit, and it soon became a commonplace that just as all sins stemmed from Satan, all heresies were born out of the teaching of Simon. This tradition resulted in drawing up genealogies of heresiarchs. Heretics were depicted as the inheritors of their predecessors’ doctrines, teachers and disciples, forming a chain that theologically ended in Simon.²⁴

How prevalent and far from forgotten the figure of Simon, as the father and ultimate source of all the heresies, still was in the days when the new enemy, Manichaeism, appeared is demonstrated by anti-Manichaean writers, who keep mentioning the names of the two together. In the *De Trinitate*

²⁰ Ibid. 36-7, and “Maître et disciple: les hérétiques Simon et Ménandre,” 80-2.

²¹ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III. Pref. (eds. A. Rousseau, and L. Doutreleau. SC 211. Paris: Cerf, 1974.)

²² Ibid. II. Pref. 1. (eds. A. Rousseau, and L. Doutreleau. SC 294. Paris: Cerf, 1982): *omnes a Simone haeretici initia sumentes impia et irreligiosa dogmata induxerunt*.

²³ Ibid. I.27.4 (eds. A. Rousseau, and L. Doutreleau. SC 264. Paris: Cerf, 1979): *omnes qui quoquo modo adulterant veritatem, et praeconium Ecclesiae laedunt, Simonis Samaritani Magi discipuli et successores sunt*.

²⁴ Thus Simon was said, for example, to be the source of Menander, Saturninus, Basilides, Carpocrates, Valentinus, Cerdon, through Valentinus the father of all the Gnostics, through Saturninus the origin of the Encratites, through Cerdon the predecessor of Marcus, the Gnostic Magician who himself was said to be the spiritual ancestor of the Priscillianists in Spain.

Liber, written in 398 and attributed to Didymus Alexandrinus, Mani appears plainly as a heir of Simon's teaching, who presents no novelty: "this dogma is the emanation of the dirty mud derived from the Samaritan Simon Magus."²⁵ Simon was also the yardstick to which all heresies were compared: Cyril of Jerusalem, wishing to prove that the depravity of Mani was so enormous, that he even "excelled" Simon Magus, says "if Simon, wishing to acquire the power (of the Spirit) for money was damned to perdition, how much more is Mani guilty of impiety, he who boasted of being the Holy Spirit."²⁶

Thus Hegemonius' claim that Scythianus lived at the time of the Apostles [however unlikely this sounds from the rational point of view] would make an immediate connection between Simon, the "father of all heresies," and Mani, for the only heretic whose name is connected with the Apostles is Simon. If Mani had teachers who can be traced back to the time of Simon, this would fit him into the 'Simonian succession' of heretics, as tradition demanded, and thereby reduce him to the level of the countless pseudo-prophets and religious founders who abound in the anti-heretical works of the Church Fathers, and both he and his system could be deprived of any originality and primacy that he and his followers claimed.

The idea of 'Simonian succession' would also explain why both Scythianus and Terebinthus, and consequently their heir, Mani, strove to become experts in the science of the Egyptians, that is, magic. As Simon was known to dabble in black magic, using his expertise in the magic arts to manipulate people, so are all his 'descendants' versed in witchcraft.²⁷ This also makes it understandable why Hegemonius 'sent' Scythianus to Egypt: Egypt was known (besides Babylon) as the cradle of magic. Most Gnostic teachers accused of magic, like Basilides, Carpocrates, Marcus the Magician and

²⁵ Didymus Alexandrinus, *De Trinitate Liber* III.42. Patrologia Graeca (PG) 39. 989: Τοῦτο τοίνυν τὸ δόγμα ἐκροία τις ἐστὶ τοῦ ἐξελθόντος βορβόρου ἀπὸ Σίμωνος, τοῦ ἐκ Σαμαρείας Μάγου.

²⁶ Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catechesis* XVI.10 PG 33.931: Εἰ οὖν ὁ Σίμων, θέλησας μισθῷ λάβειν τὴν ἐξουσίαν, εἰς ἀπώλειάν ἐστι, Μάνης ὁ ἐαυτὸν τὸ Πνεῦμα εἶναι τοῦ ἁγίου, πόσῳ ἔχει τὴν ἀσέβειαν;

²⁷ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I.23.4 SC 264: *Igitur horum mystici sacerdotes . . . magias autem perficiunt, quemadmodum potest unusquisque ipsorum. Exorcismis et incantationibus utuntur. Amatoria et agogina et qui dicuntur paredri et oniropompi, et quaeque sunt alia periurga apud eos studiose exercentur. Cf. Hippolytus, Philosophoumena* VI.20.1 (ed. Marcovich. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986): Οἱ οὖν τούτου μαθηταὶ μαγείας ἐπιτελοῦσι καὶ ἐπαοιδαῖς (χρῶνται), φίλτρα τε καὶ ἀγώγimia καὶ τοὺς λεγομένους ὄνειροπόμους δαίμονας ἐπιτέμπουσι πρὸς τὸ ταράσσειν οὓς βούλονται.

Cerinthus, were Egyptians. Some sources, like the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, even mention Simon as being of Egyptian, Alexandrian origin.²⁸

But there seems to be more to the story than making the traditional—and almost obligatory—connection between Simon and any heresy worth its salt, with the help of inserting such motifs as the practice of black magic, or the rather forced genealogy that would trace the origin of Mani's movement back to the time of the Apostles, that is, Simon's era. Reading the *Acta*, it almost seems a revised addition of incidents in Simon's life, which was well-known to any man with a basic education in the fourth century.

Simon's Flight

Perhaps the most important motif pointing towards Simon is the story of Terebinthus falling, or rather being thrust by an angel on divine command, off the rooftop of a house where he ascended at sunrise to perform some magic rites: "Finally, early one morning he ascended to a high roof top, where he began to invoke certain names . . . the most just God decreed that he be thrust beneath the ground by a Spirit, and at once he was hurled from the heights, and his dead body fell headlong down."²⁹

As we know from the *Apocryphal Acts* and from the writings of the Church Fathers, Simon met his sad (or in their opinion deserved) end, when after being ousted by Peter in every debate, he finally tried to prove his divinity before the people of Rome and Nero by trying to fly up through the air toward the heavens. He did indeed rise from the earth, to the astonishment of the crowd, when Peter started praying to God not to let Simon distract human souls from the true religion by such a fraudulent miracle, and God struck down Simon, who smashed to the ground. The magic flight of Simon and his utter failure was one of the favourite themes of early Christian literature, and we have a great number of slightly differing accounts of the event.

Though some versions like the *Acta Petri* describe Simon as taking off from the ground, there are other versions depicting Simon as taking off (or jumping off if we like) from the top of a high edifice: In the highly

²⁸ *Homilies* II.22.2. PG 2.89.

²⁹ Hegemonius, 63.5-6. GCS 16.92.8-15: *mane primo ascendit solarium quoddam excelsum, ubi nomina quaedam invocare coepit . . . iustissimus Deus sub terras eum detrudi per spiritum iubet: et continuo de summo deiectus, exanime corpus deorsum praecipitatum est.* See also Vermes, *Acta Archelai*, 143.5-6.

fabulous *Acta Petri et Pauli*³⁰ Simon requests Nero "to build for me a lofty tower of wood, and I, going up upon it, will call my angels and order them to take me in the sight of all, to my father in heaven" so that Nero "may know, that these men (that is, Paul and Peter) are liars, and that I have been sent from the heavens." Arnobius, writing around 300,³¹ tells us that the chariot and the four fiery horses of Simon were blown away by the mouth of Peter; and Simon, falling off, broke his leg. He was then "taken to the town of Brunda where, exhausted by his pains and the shame, he again threw himself headlong into the deep from the top of a very high roof."³²

The angel as a divine vehicle preventing such an impious enterprise also appears in both stories. In several accounts Simon is not simply said to have fallen, but to have been thrown down by an angel or angels: a near contemporary of Hegemonius, Philastrius, in an elliptical reference to Simon's death, says that "defeated everywhere by the prayer of the sainted Apostle, he was stricken by an angel (*percussus ab angelo*), as he deserved to perish."³³ Similarly Terebinthus is thrust off the rooftop by an angel at the order of God: *Deus per spiritum eum detrudi iussit*.

It is obvious how closely this account resembles Simon's death, both regarding the exact manner of their death and even the motivation for attempting to fly. As we can see, Simon used his magical ability to fly as the last resort to convince people of his divinity. Though Hegemonius gives no direct reason for Terebinthus' early morning exercise climbing up the roof, other than in order to perform some rites (at least in the extant version), it must be noted that previous to this incident the *Acta* describe how Terebinthus was bested in all arguments with the priests of Mithra.³⁴ It is worthwhile, however, to take a look at Epiphanius, who seems to have followed the original version of the *Acta* quite closely, though occasionally

³⁰ *Acta Petri et Pauli*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 8, 484. Transl. by Tischendorf and ed. by A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

³¹ L. Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*. 1. Vol. 423. (London: MacMillan, 1923).

³² Arnobius, *Adversus Gentes* II.12 PL 5.829: *Perlatus Brundam, cruciatibus et pudore defessum ex altissimi culminis se rursus praecipitasse fastigio*.

³³ Philastrius, *Liber de Haer.* 29 PL 12.1141: *devictus undique oratione beati apostoli, atque percussus ab angelo, sic meruit interire . . .*

³⁴ The text of Hegemonius mentions a prophet named Parcus, and Labdacus the son of Mithras, but Epiphanius (*Panarion* 66.3.15) and Cyrillus (*Catechesis* XVI.23) understood this to mean priests of Mithra. See also Vermes, *Acta Archelai*, Note 315, pp. 142-3.

elaborating on the original text. In Epiphanius' version (where, suggestively enough, he doubles the story of falling off, and makes Scythianus meet his death by similarly falling off a rooftop as well) both Scythianus and Terebinthus climb to the top of a house to perform some magic rite with the intention of convincing people or gaining some power over them. Scythianus failed to accomplish anything in his debates with the learned men of Judea, "As he could not achieve anything, rather he left defeated, and attempted with the help of the magic books he had—as he was a sorcerer as well . . .—to deceive them [to play a trick on them with the help of miracles], and ascending to the top of a house, and failing to achieve what he wished again, he fell off into the deep and left this life."³⁵

This explanation, performing some obnoxious magic rite with the aim of winning a debate or proving his divine nature, is repeated in the case of Terebinthus. Epiphanius sees these magic rites as an instrument to make people believe him. When Terebinthus proved to be ousted in the continual debate with the priests of Mithra and "was not able to resist the chief priests of idolatry, but was defeated by them in the debate and made to flee in a most shameful fashion, he followed Scythianus' example and ascended to the rooftop of a house, and there with magic art he tried to achieve that no one dare contradict him anymore, and thrown off by an angel he fell off."³⁶

But can we assert that we have enough reasons to suppose that all this climbing on rooftops should somehow be brought into connection with flying? Taking all the evidence into account, it seems likely that we can do so.

1. The fact that Terebinthus has to climb to a high spot in order to perform the rite or magic, indicates that it was somehow connected with the demons of the air. Hegemonius, in fact, makes an obscure reference to the demons of the air, stating that Terebinthus "had climbed up alone, to avoid being detected by anybody, because if he had pretended or treated

³⁵ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 66.3.7-8 (eds. K. Holl and J. Dummer. (GCS) vol. III. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985): 'Ὡς δὲ οὐκ ἴσχυσέ τι ἀνῦσαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἦττον μᾶλλον ἀπηνέγκατο, ἐπετήδευσε δι' ὧν εἶχε μαγικῶν βιβλίων—καὶ γὰρ καὶ γόγης ἦν . . .—φαντασίαν τινά· ἐπὶ δώματος (γὰρ) ἀνελθὼν καὶ ἐπιτηδεύσας, ὅμως οὐδὲν ἰσχύσας. ἀλλὰ καταπεσὼν ἐκ τοῦ δώματος, τέλει τοῦ βίου ἐχρήσατο.

³⁶ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 66.3.13-14: [καὶ] μὴ δυνηθεὶς μήτε κἂν πρὸς τοὺς τῆς εἰδωλολατρείας πρυτάνεις διαλεχθῆναι, ἀλλ' ἐν ἐλέγχῳ καταστάς παρ' αὐτῶν, καὶ τὸ αἰσχος ἀπενεγκάμενος, ὡσούτως τῷ προειρημένῳ Σκυθιανῷ τὰ ὅμοια φρονήσας, ἐπὶ τὸ δωματίον ἀνελθὼν, μαγεύειν τι δῆθεν πρὸς τὸ μὴ τινα αὐτῷ ἀντιλέγειν ἐπιτηδεύσας, ὑπὸ ἀγγέλου καταχθεὶς κατέπεσε.

it as unimportant, he thought he would be subject to punishment by the princes of the air."³⁷ Cyril clearly understands the text to refer to magic performed with the help of the demons of the air: "then he ascended to the top of the house and *invoking the demons of the air* . . . stricken at divine order he fell off the roof and gave up his soul."³⁸

Similarly, the tradition developed around Simon's figure often attributed Simon's flight not simply to his magical capabilities, but to the help of demons, who carried him through the air. Cyril of Jerusalem claims that "Simon promised to rise up into the heavens, and he was carried through the air in the chariot of the demons."³⁹ In the Greek *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, Simon is said to have "mounted aloft into mid-air, borne up, Peter says, by demons."⁴⁰ Similarly Theodore bar Koni says that when the crowd wanted to stone Simon, for failing to resurrect a dead man as he had promised, "the demons lifted him in the air, but the demons were driven away by the prayer of the leader of the Apostles, and they dropped Simon."⁴¹

2. Mani himself can easily be linked with the notion of flying. Manichaean texts attest that he used "magic flight" as a means of conversion and initiation. In the account of his conversion, he takes him up high in the air: "The Apostle led the righteous man (Tūrān-shāh) through the air" thus showing him that nothing was bigger, higher and lighter (that is, more filled with the divine Light) than Wisdom (the gnosis brought by Mani) and converting him from his religion: "When Tūrān-shāh and his noble men heard his words they . . . accepted the belief, and became friends of the Apostle and the religion."⁴² In another account of the same event (unfortunately the text is very fragmentary) it seems to be Mani who rose above the earth: "When Tūrān-shāh saw the Apostle rise higher, then he fell on his knees from afar."⁴³

³⁷ Trans. Vermes, *Acta Archelai*, 143.5.

³⁸ Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses* VI.23. PG 33.579: Εἶτα ἐπὶ δόματος ἀνελθὼν, καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς ἀερίους δαίμονας . . . θεόπληκτος γενόμενος καὶ καταβληθεὶς ἀπὸ τοῦ δόματος, ἐξέψυξε.

³⁹ Ibid. VI.15. PG 33.564: Ἐπαγγελλομένου γὰρ τοῦ Σίμωνος μετεωρίζεσθαι εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καὶ ἐπ' ὀρήματος δαιμόνων ἐπ' ἀέρος φερομένου.

⁴⁰ Thorndike, *History of Magic*, 422.

⁴¹ Theodore bar Koni, *Liber Scholiorum*, *Mimra* XI.14. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium vol. 432. tom. 188.223, transl. by Robert Hespel and René Draguet.

⁴² fryštg 'w 'rd'w pd 'ndrw'z w'st . . . kd twr'n s'h 'wd 'z'd'n 'ym sxwn 'šnwd . . . w'wryft pdgryft, 'wd 'w fryštg 'wd dyn šyrg'mg bwd 'hynd. M 48, in Mary Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, 34-5. (Leiden: Brill, 1975.)

⁴³ 'wd kd twr'n š'h dyd kw gyrbkr 'br 'x'št, 'dy'n wxd 'x dwr pt z'nwg 'wyst'd. M 48, in Boyce, *A Reader*, 36.

The Helena Motif

There is another interesting element, which seems out of place (or at least hardly relevant enough to be mentioned) in the description of the life of an heresiarch (especially of an imaginary one). Hegemonius speaks of a captive, prisoner woman, *captivam quamdam*,⁴⁴ whom Scythianus married. The meaning of *captiva* is not quite clear in this context. Socrates, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, uses the term αἰχμάλωτος⁴⁵ denoting prisoner of war, or someone taken captive by arms, a booty of war. It is also feasible that the original Greek word in the *Acta* might have had a connotation that referred to a prostitute. At least Epiphanius speaks not of a slave girl, but of a beautiful prostitute, “Scythianus found a certain ruined woman, with a beautiful body, by whom he was completely smitten, and whom he took away from the brothel, where she worked as a prostitute, and having freed her he tied her to himself in marriage.”⁴⁶

The mythology attributed to Simon Magus also speaks of a woman, in whose person the double roles of a prisoner of war and a prostitute are inseparably intertwined.⁴⁷ One of the most important, and at the same time singular, features of Simon’s mythology is that on his journeys he took about with him a woman called Helena or Sophia, whom he rescued from a *brothel*, and whom he claimed was the fallen First Thought of God (Epinoia, or sometimes Sophia, the Wisdom of God). The story of the fallen Epinoia is a typically Gnostic myth of the creation, the *imprisonment* of divine light in matter and the final redemption of this light, that is of the human soul. Epinoia is the First Thought of the Godhead; she sym-

⁴⁴ Hegemonius 62.4 GCS 16.90.23.

⁴⁵ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.22 PG 67.135-6: γυναῖκα εἶχεν αἰχμάλωτον, in the Latin translation: *uxorem habuit captivam*.

⁴⁶ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 66.2.4: Εὐρὼν ἐκεῖ γύναιον ἐξωλέεσταν, καὶ κάλλει σώματος πρόοπτον, ἐκπλήξαν τε αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀσυνεσίαν, ἀνελόμενός τε τοῦτο ἀπὸ τοῦ στέγους (ἔστηκε γὰρ ἡ τοιαύτη ἐν τῇ πολυκοίῳ ἀσυννότῃ) ἐπεκαθέσθη τῷ γυναίῳ, καὶ ἐλευθερώσας αὐτό, συνήφθη αὐτῷ πρὸς γάμον.

⁴⁷ The following account above is an abridged version of the Simonian myth of Helena. Though the Simonian myth was described by great many heresiologists, our most important accounts come from Justin (1 *Apologia* 26, 1-3), Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* I.23-24), Hippolytus (*Philosophoumena* VI.9-18) and Epiphanius (*Panarion* 21.2-3). For a modern treatment and interpretation of the Helena myth, see R. M. Grant, “Simon Magus and Helen, his Thought,” in *Gnosticism in the Early Church*, ed. David M. Scholer. 70-96. (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1993.) And Gyula Rugási, “Simon Mágus,” *Thélème* 2.1 (1998): 7-38.

bolizes His generative power. She was the one who set the creation in motion by descending to the lower regions and indirectly generating the angels, the powers by whom this world was then made. After creating them, she was *captured* by her own creations, dragged down, and had to suffer all manner of abuse from them. She was enclosed in human flesh and had to migrate from female body to female body. And since all the powers contended for her possessions, enamored of her exceptional beauty, war and strife broke out wherever she appeared. One of her forms was that of the beautiful Helena of Troy, and this was the real cause of the Trojan War. As a final degradation of her divine nature she was enclosed in the *body of a prostitute*, and Simon, who descended for the sake of rescuing her, encounters her in this form in a brothel, from which she is rescued by him. What this myth really signifies is the imprisonment and humiliation of the human soul, a parcel of the divine light, in the body. The freeing of Helena (or Sophia), 'the lost sheep', symbolizes the redemption of the human soul by the divine Saviour, Simon. This myth exercised a great fascination over the imagination of the Church Fathers. "It is the fall, suffering, degradation, and eventual redemption of this female hypostasis of the divine that the older reports on Simon are alone concerned with."⁴⁸ The fact that she was a prostitute working in a brothel, who was bought by Simon, is mentioned by all the sources as a sure sign of Simon's depravity.

It might be worthwhile to compare the words of Hippolytus describing the 'lost sheep' of Simon with the descriptions of the girl Scythianus married. Hippolytus says "She was prostituting herself in a brothel in Tyre, a Phoenician city, where he found her when he descended. Because he said that he came to search for her so that he would free her from her chains, and when he set her free he took her around with himself saying that she was the lost sheep. This liar, having fallen in love with this woman, named Helena, bought her . . .".⁴⁹ This reminds us of Scythianus' *captiva* in Hegemonius' *Acta Archelai*, and even more of the prostitute in Epiphanius' interpretation of the original text.

⁴⁸ Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 107. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

⁴⁹ Hippolytus, *Philosophoumena* VI.19.3-4: ὕστερον ἐπὶ τέλους ἐν Τύρῳ τῆς Φοινίκης πόλει στήναι, ἣν κατέλθων εὗρεν. Ἐπὶ γὰρ τὴν ταύτης πρώτης ζήτησιν ἔφη παραγεγονέναι, ὥπως ῥύσῃται αὐτὴν τῶν δεσμῶν, ἣν λυτρωσάμενος ἅμα ἑαυτῷ περιῆγε, φάσκων τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ἀπόλωλος πρόβατον . . . Ὁ δὲ ψυδρὸς ἐρασθεὶς τοῦ γυναικίου τούτου, Ἑλένης καλουμένης, ὠνησάμενος εἶχε . . .

The similarities are striking: a beautiful woman, working as a prostitute in a brothel, who is rescued from there and kindles love in her ‘saviour’ and is finally married by him.

It is noteworthy that Scythianus’ prostitute is remembered as “a woman with a beautiful body”, for Helena’s main characteristic was her irresistible beauty, which made the archons covet her⁵⁰ and led to the famous Trojan War. Furthermore while Helena is a prostitute, she is at the same time a prisoner, a captive of the archons. Words that refer to this ‘captive’ condition are often used to refer to her.⁵¹ Similarly, the *captiva* of Scythianus can be seen as a prisoner, or prisoner of war, as is attested by the interpretation of Socrates. In summary, the similarities between the two female figures, Helena and the wife of Scythianus, are far too numerous to be considered mere coincidences.⁵²

There is one more small ‘biographical’ detail that can perhaps be connected with Simon. Terebinthus in Persia, besides calling himself Buddha, claimed that he was born of a virgin and brought up by an angel in the mountains.⁵³ Simon, in the apocryphal *Recognitiones*, says “do not think that I am a man of your kind. I am neither a magician . . . nor am I the son

⁵⁰ For, according to the interpretation of the different Gnostic trends, the Trojan war was, in fact, the work of the archons wishing to capture and possess her.

⁵¹ For example, Irenaeus writes of her as *haec detenta est ab ipsis* (i.e. the archons), *Adversus Haereses*, I.23.2 SC 264. The words used by Hippolytus, of freeing Helena from her chains (bonds, ῥύσηται) and legally setting her free also brings to mind a *captiva* (the original meaning of λυτρωσάμενος is the freeing of a prisoner of war with the help of ransom, ransoming).

⁵² After having written the first draft of this article I found that the similarity between Simon’s Helena and Scythianus’ prostitute in Epiphanius’ version had already been noted by Baur in his since sadly neglected book (Friedrich Christian Baur, *Das manichäische Religionssystem nach den Quellen neu untersucht und entwickelt*. Tübingen: E. F. Osiander, 1831. pp. 467-475). His interpretation is, however, completely different. He does not see the similarity as a possible literary model for drawing the figure of Mani in the *Acta*, but rather interprets it as a part of the original Manichaean myth. In his understanding this prostitute or prisoner is no other than the Manichaean “world soul” (*Weltseele*)—mentioned in the *Acta* c. 9—who was modelled on the Gnostic Sophia or Epinoia by Mani himself. He even connects it with the Indian notion of “Maia”, which he sees as a possible source of the idea. Furthermore, he even fleetingly mentions the similar circumstances of Terebinthus’ (and Scythianus’) death and divine birth, actually to support his hypothesis of Indian and Buddhist influence on the Manichaean-Gnostic myth, but does not follow up these motifs.

⁵³ Hegemonius 63.3 GCS 16.91.18-9: *ex quadam autem virgine natum se esse simulavit et ab angelo in montibus enutritum*.

of Antonius [his alleged father]. Because before my mother, Rachel, came together with him, she already conceived me while still a virgin."⁵⁴

The notion that an attempt was made to draw parallels between Mani and Simon Magus, or to project the figure of Simon, the arch-heretic, onto Mani, could also provide an explanation for the intriguing fact that only two alleged teachers were ascribed to Mani, although it would be chronologically impossible to bridge the time gap between the Apostles' era and Mani's childhood⁵⁵ in two generations.

Simon, in his attempt to delude people into believing him a god (or God), is said by the Church Fathers to "have taught that he is the one who appeared among the Jews as the Son, among the Samaritans as the Father, and among all the other nations as the Holy Spirit."⁵⁶ Mani with his two teachers could form just such an 'Unholy Trinity'. Though Hegemonius only mentions the fact that Mani claimed to be the Paraclete or Holy Spirit, the idea of an 'Unholy Trinity' is implied. In any case, this is how the relation of these three persons is interpreted by Photius, according to whom Mani called himself the Paraclete in his impious teachings, while Scythianus called himself the Father, and Terebinthus claimed to be the Son of God.⁵⁷ This would also explain the chronological impossibility of ascribing to Mani only two teachers, although it would take quite a few more generations to count back to the time of the Apostles.

The Apocrypha as Literary Models

The hypothesis of Simon's life serving as a model might perhaps be expected, if the previous argumentation is proved valid, as an explanation for those motifs of the *Acta* that could not be otherwise explained or accounted for. This explanation, however, leads to further questions. Did Hegemonius insert the motifs of Simon's life into Mani's biography con-

⁵⁴ *Recognitioes* II.14.1-2 GCS 51.59 (eds. B. Rehm. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1965): *Simon . . . ita respondit: Ne putetis, inquit, quod generis vestri homo sim; ego neque magus sum . . . neque Antonii filius. Ante enim quam mater mea Rachel conveniret cum eo, adhuc virgo concepit me.*

⁵⁵ Mani was born in 216/7.

⁵⁶ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I.23.1 SC 264: *Simon . . . docuit semetipsum esse, qui inter Iudaeos quidem quasi Filius apparuerit, in Samaria autem quasi Pater descenderit, in reliquis vero gentibus quasi Spiritus sanctus adventaverit.*

⁵⁷ Photius, *Contra Manichaeos* I.42 PG 102.38. ὃς καὶ Παράκλητον ἑαυτὸν καὶ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐξεμάνη ὀνομάσαι . . . ὁ μὲν Σκυθιανὸς Πατέρα ἑαυτόν, ὁ δὲ Τερέβινθος Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ . . .

sciously? Did he intend to make Simon a predecessor of Mani, either literally or in the spiritual sense? If so, why did not he do it in a more obvious fashion? Why did not he invent a (more plausible) genealogy connecting Mani with Simon? Admittedly, Simon Magus' *vita* was well known to everybody in the age of Hegemonius, and hints the modern reader might consider obscure were quite clear to the contemporary reader. Still, this popularity of Simon's life does not fully explain the drawing up of such a strange biography. Possibly a—partial—solution to this puzzling question can be sought in the sources that might have served as a literary model for the *Acta* (besides the anti-heretical writings of the Church Fathers).

The *Acta Archelai* is a curious piece of writing. Lieu⁵⁸ compares it to the *De Recta Fide in Deum* of Adamantius,⁵⁹ an orthodox Christian who debated in turn and always victoriously with followers of Marcion, Bardesanes and Valentinus. However, the *Dialogue* of Adamantius, just like the debates of Augustine with Manichaeans described by him a century later, is strictly restricted to the doctrinal content of the debates. There are no 'extras' as in the *Acta*. We learn nothing of the personal background of the contestants, there are no scenes off-stage (no crowd to express its agreement or disapproval), no letters exchanged, no running around, let alone even more exotic elements. Everything is deadly serious.⁶⁰

In the *Acta*, beside the description of the character and deeds of Marcellus (rather hagiographical in its nature), which is not really connected to the debate with a Manichaean in any essential way, we have a great number of other superfluous details. We learn how the Persians were captured, and the details of their sufferings; even one of their religious rites is described in detail. We can read about all the difficulties Turbo had to face during his voyage to Carchar. In short, the *Acta* is like a traditional description of doctrinal debate between an orthodox and a heretic interpolated with the elements of a romance.

These romance elements call to mind the popular readings of the age, the Christian offspring of the antique novel: the apocryphal literature. Or rather, in this case, the various apocryphal *Acts of Peter*. The earliest literary monuments of debates with heretics are probably constituted exactly

⁵⁸ Lieu, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia*, 133.

⁵⁹ Adamantii *Dialogus de Recta Fide in Deum*. PG 11.1711-1884.

⁶⁰ Another possible comparison can be made with the anti-Manichaean writings of Augustine (though of course these could not have served as possible models). The result of such a comparison would be the same: these dialogues between Augustine and his Manichaean opponents contain no such 'romance' elements.

by these Acts⁶¹ that describe the contests of the Apostle Peter with Simon Magus, and the sad end of the latter.

The most striking feature that can be found in any apocryphal Acts concerning Simon and Peter, is the fact that the debates are repeated, as is the manner of the repetition. The apocryphal Acts build on the fact that Simon had already been defeated in a verbal fight by Peter in Palestine. Simon then travels to other lands to continue his vicious preaching, but he is soon followed by Peter (who either arrives there by chance or at the request of others to fight Simon), who defeats him again and again in the renewed debate. In the *Acta Archelai*, Mani, defeated in Carchar, flees to Diodorus, to deceive the simple souls there, believing that he will find no one there capable of opposing him, but Archelaus appears and defeats him again. It is therefore hardly surprising, that Archelaus is likened to an Apostle, when he suddenly appears in Diodorus to undertake the second debate, "The multitude that listened to the debate considered the arrival of Archelaus as something like the advent of an *Apostle*."⁶²

As a further similarity, both Mani and Simon are nearly lynched by the crowd, when they fail to fulfil their expectations. In the *Acta*, the crowd, upon hearing the glorious refutation of Mani's doctrines by Archelaus, attack Mani, once during the first debate, and then again at the end of the same debate. On both occasions they are restrained by Archelaus.⁶³ In the *Acts of Peter*,⁶⁴ when Simon, despite his boasts, fails to resurrect a dead man, the crowd wants to burn him at the stake, and has to be restrained by Peter, who warns them not to sully their hands with such a sin.

Another interesting detail is Archelaus' mocking remark that if Mani were really the Paraclete he should have foresight of future events and

⁶¹ *Acta Petri*, *Acta Petri et Pauli*, *Acta Petri et Pauli Orientalia*, *Acts of Simon Cephas*, and we might even include the *Pseudo-Clementines* (*Homilies* and *Recognitions*).

⁶² Hegemonius 53.4 GCS 16.78.15-6: *Multitudo vero auditorum adventum Archelai velut apostoli praesentiam opinata est.*

⁶³ Hegemonius 23.1 GCS 16.34.30-2: *His auditis, turbae quae aderant vehementer gavisae sunt, ita ut paene manus inicerent in Manen, quos vix Archelaus cohibens et reprimens conquiescere fecit.* And Hegemonius, 43.1-2 GCS 16.63.18-28: *Tunc vero infantes, qui forte convenerant primi, Manen pellere ac fugare coeperunt, quos turba reliqua insecuta concitavit se ad effugandum Manen. Quod cum pervidisset Archelaus, elevata in modum tubae voce sua, multitudinem cupiens cohibere ait: Cessate, fratres dilecti, ne forte rei sanguinis inveniamur in die iudicii: scriptum est enim de talibus quia "oportet et haereses esse inter vos, ut qui probati sunt manifesti fiant inter vos"* (Ep. Cor. 11.19) *Et his dictis sedatae sunt turbae.*

⁶⁴ "Péter Rómában," (Peter in Rome) 28, in *Az apostolok csodálatos cselekedeti* (The Wonderful Acts of the Apostles). trans. Klára Tóth. (Budapest: Telosz, 1996) 69.

should also be able to see into people's minds, as he evidently failed to do, when he hoped to convert Marcellus, a staunch Christian, to his dogma. As he says, "It does not seem to me excusable that he knew not what the future would be, for he should have known beforehand who his people would be, if the Spirit of the Paraclete really dwelled in him."⁶⁵ Similarly, in the *Acts of Peter and Paul* Peter mocks Simon in the course of their debate for not knowing what he was thinking of (he asked for a barley loaf): "Simon said . . . for the thoughts of men no one knows but God alone. And Peter said to Simon: Certainly thou feignest thyself to be a god; why, then, dost thou not reveal the thoughts of every man?"⁶⁶

As was demonstrated above, the apocryphal Acts resemble the *Acta* on several points. There is a very significant difference, however. The Apocryphal Acts contain a number of romance elements that could have influenced the narrative part of the *Acta*, but they are pure romances. No doctrinal debates are described between Peter and Simon. So, while in anti-heretical debates, like that of Adamantius, we have a literary model solely for the debate part of the *Acta*, the apocryphal Acts could serve as models only where the romance element is concerned. There is one possible source, however, which combines the elements and structure of the antique novel with long doctrinal debates similarly to the *Acta* and which seems to resemble the *Acta* both structurally and in a great number of motifs employed for the description of a heresiarch and the debate with him: the *Recognitiones*.

The Recognitiones

The *Recognitiones* is a theological and philosophical romance⁶⁷ that describes the travels of Clement in search of his lost family. In the course of his travels Clement makes friends with Peter and witnesses several verbal contests between Peter and Simon. These debates between them are the main theme of the first three books. The provenance and especially the date of the work are highly debated.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Hegemonius, 53.8 GCS 16.78.32-5: *Non enim mihi venia dignus videtur qui ignoraverit quod futurum est, oportebat enim eum praenoscere qui sunt proprii sui, si quidem spiritus paracletus habitat in eo.*

⁶⁶ "Acta Petri et Pauli," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 8.481.

⁶⁷ For an analysis of the romance nature of the *Recognitiones* see Oscar Cullmann, *Le Problème Littéraire et Historique du Roman Pseudo-Clémentin: Étude sur le Rapport entre le Gnosticisme et le Judéo-Christianisme*. (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1930). "Le Cadre Romanesque," 132-141.

⁶⁸ The many and often conflicting theories on the origin of the Pseudo-Clementine

The *Recognitiones* belong to the Pseudo-Clementine corpus, a series of apocryphal writings, which circulated under the name of Clement of Rome, and consists of three writings: the *Recognitiones*, the *Homilies*, and the *Epitome*, an extract of the *Homilies*. The *Recognitiones* in its present form might be quite late, but the basic document probably goes back to the second century. It was born in a Jewish-Christian milieu, and is probably an Ebionite writing, whose orthodox view on the Mosaic Law and the Old Testament is reflected in the debates between Peter and Simon Magus.⁶⁹ In exactly what form and at what stage of its development it could have served as a model for the *Acta*, we cannot tell, for the exact nature and dates of this development are not quite clear, but its influence seems very likely.

The *Recognitiones* has a double character, combining romantic narrative concerning Peter, Simon Magus and the family of Clement with long argumentative, didactic and doctrinal discussions and dialogues. It recounts the journey of Clement in search of his family, but the opposition between Peter and Simon becomes the leading motif of the story. The story begins with the narrative of Clement's life, the description of his character and his ambitions, and his search for religious identity. It continues with his arrival at Caesarea at the same time as Peter, who arrives at the request of Bishop Zachaeus to contest Simon, who is seeking adherents for his movement in the city. From here the story of Clement's journey alternates with the accounts of long debates between Peter and Simon. The *Recognitiones* can be said to resemble the *Acta*, inasmuch as long doctrinal discussions are mixed with the elements of a romance. In both cases the debate between Peter and Simon, the real theme of the religious romance (written in the first case against Pauline, in the second against Manichaean tenets) is embedded in the life of someone, who has no real relevance from the point of view of the debate. The *Recognitiones* start with the description of the youth and pious nature of Clement and his search for truth, while the *Acta* start with the description of the pious character of Marcellus, and his

writings have recently been summed up by F. Stanley Jones in his article "The Pseudo Clementines: A History of Research," *The Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies* (1982): II.1. (1-33) and II.2 (63-96). The *Recognitiones* is dated by some to the early fourth or even to the third century, while others are in favour of a later date, with 410 as an *ante quem*. In any case, all the researchers agree that the *Recognitiones* in its present form is the result of a long literary development that may date back as far as the second century and should be located in Syria. It is possible that the author of the *Acta Archelai*, also from this region, was familiar with an earlier version.

⁶⁹ Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme: Visage Inconnu de l'Eglise Primitve*, 71-72. (Paris: Desclee and Cie, 1957).

noble deeds. Following this, however, the texts concentrate on the doctrinal debate, in which neither of them plays any relevant part.

Besides the general structural similarity, there are a number of details concerning the debate and the contestants that the two works have in common:

Peter is sent to Caesarea to dispute against Simon because Zacchaeus, bishop of Caesarea, dispatched a letter complaining that Simon, claiming to be God, has confused the minds of many people.⁷⁰ Similarly, Diodorus turns for help to Archelaus in a letter when Mani starts preaching his doctrine in his town.

The 'preparations' for the debate present us with some striking similarities. Both Peter and Archelaus demand to know beforehand the teaching, the character and the conduct of their opponents. Peter asks before the first debate: "I would like to know about his ways and about his deeds, if someone knows it, let him tell me,"⁷¹ and goes on to explain why and what he would like to know about the life and morals of Simon. Archelaus and Marcellus also make their inquiries before the arrival of Mani: "They asked about Mani with the greatest interest, desiring to learn who he is, where he comes from and in what manner he argues."⁷²

In both cases the informants are two former, converted disciples of the heresiarch, who, for some not clearly defined reasons, convert to the 'true religion' and are later included in the retinues of Peter and Archelaus respectively. In the *Recognitiones* it is Nicetas and Aquila, two former accomplices of Simon's wicked deeds, who turn on him and come to admire Peter instead. In the *Acta* it is Turbo, the messenger of Mani, who decides to stay with Marcellus and Archelaus, though we never hear the reason for his conversion, and who manifests all the contempt of Nicetas and Aquila against his old master. To make up the number of two (so it seems at least), Archelaus forces another convert into his tale, a certain Sissinius, of whom we have heard nothing before Archelaus embarks on recounting what he had heard of Mani.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Recognitiones* I.72.3 GCS 51.49: *quia Zacchaeus de Caesarea scripserit . . . Simonem quendam Samaraeum magum plurimos nostrorum subvertere . . .*

⁷¹ *Ibid.* II.3.3 GCS 51.52: *Scire enim velim, quibus sit moribus et quibus actibus, quod mihi, si quis scit, indicare non cesset.*

⁷² Hegemonius, 6.5 GCS 16.9.8-9: *valde enim studiose uterque de Manis studiis perquirebant, scire cupientes quis et unde vel quid verbi ferat.*

⁷³ Sissinus was, in fact, one of Mani's disciples he sent out to spread the new religion.

The way the two heresiarchs appear for the public debate that is to take place in Zacchaeus' and Marcellus' house, surrounded by their adherents, is also described in similar terms. A great crowd collects for the debate in the court of Zacchaeus, "in the midst of whom stands Simon, supported by many of his followers . . . looking like a standard bearer".⁷⁴ The same military appearance, where the heresiarch appears surrounded by his followers, resurfaces in the *Acta*: Mani approaches "leading with him twenty-two elected youths and virgins . . . and his countenance was like that of an old Persian magician or military commander."⁷⁵

Peter's debate with Simon ends, naturally, in the crowd, acting as a lay jury in this case as well, chasing Simon out of the court. Again it is Peter who restrains the crowd, reminding them that if "God tolerates and suffers their existence until the Day of the Judgement, then why should not they endure what God endures as well."⁷⁶ This is somewhat reminiscent of Archelaus' words, when he stops the enraged crowd from attacking Mani: "Stop, dear brothers, lest you be found with blood on your hands on the Day of Judgement. For it is written about his likes 'there have to be heresies among you, so that those who are tried become manifest among you'."⁷⁷ Both of them speak of the Day of Judgement, and both remind the audience that even the existence of heretics is a part of God's scheme in the world.

The mysterious birth of Simon from a virgin has already been mentioned in the last chapter as a possible source for Terebinthus' birth from a virgin.

The similar structure, and the number of motifs shared by these works is perhaps enough to argue for the hypothesis of the apocryphal *Acts* and the *Recognitiones* (either in its present or an earlier version)⁷⁸ as possible literary models for this strange anti-heretical work.

⁷⁴ *Recognitiones*, II.19.4-8 GCS 51.63: *turba enim multa in atrio domus congregata te operitur quorum in medio multis fultus adseclis consistit Simon . . . vidit et magum Simonem in medio eorum velut signiferum stantem.*

⁷⁵ Hegemonius, 14.2-4 GCS 16.22.21-23.1: *adventavit Manes, adducens secum iuvenes et virgines electas ad viginti duo simul . . . vultus vero ut senis Persae artificis et bellorum ducis videbatur.*

⁷⁶ *Recognitiones*, III.49.2-3 GCS 51.129: *Patienter, fratres, malos ferre debetis, scientes quia Deus cum possit eos excidere, patitur tamen durare usque ad praestitutam diem, in qua de omnibus iudicium fiet. Quomodo ergo nos non patiemur, quos patitur Deus?*

⁷⁷ See above, note 63.

⁷⁸ Though it would be hard to ascertain at exactly which point of its literary development. See above, note 68.

Conclusion

The aim of the *Life of Mani* in the *Acta* is to insert Mani (and thus his followers) into the traditional view taken of heretics, by attributing him biographical elements that conjure up the figure of a typical heresiarch and pseudo-prophet. Besides using the more traditional tools of heresiology, this aim is achieved by establishing a close connection between the person of Mani, and the “father of all heretics,” Simon Magus. Establishing this connection is realized through attributing two ‘predecessors’ to Mani and through the completely fictional biography attributed to them: the motifs of this fraudulent *vita* are clearly taken from the life of Simon, well known to everybody in this age.

The possibility of such a connection has already been noted by F. C. Baur nearly two centuries ago, and also recently by Maddalena Scopello, in her article “Simon le mage, prototype de Mani selon les *Acta Archelai*.”⁷⁹ Baur seems, it must be noted, to have followed up a completely different line of thought, seeking the explanation in a shared Gnostic-Manichaean, or even Indian-Gnostic-Manichaean myth.⁸⁰ Scopello, on the other hand, presents Simon as the literary archetype of Mani, but does not, in my opinion, support this claim sufficiently. She puts forward her theory on the basis of a number of similar motifs used to describe Mani and Simon.⁸¹ However, as these accusations are commonplaces of the contemporary anti-heretical literature, as Scopello herself admits, we cannot be sure whether these similarities are not simply coincidental, and they do not seem to be profound enough in themselves to prove that Simon served as an archetype for the figure of Mani.

In this article I have endeavoured to point out and detail further, and perhaps more substantial, similarities between the biographies in the *Acta* and the well-known versions of Simon’s life: the motif of the magical flight;

⁷⁹ Maddalena Scopello, “Simon le mage, prototype de Mani selon les *Acta Archelai*,” *Revue de la Société Ernest-Renan*, 1988: 67-79.

⁸⁰ See above, note 52.

⁸¹ They are both voyagers, itinerant missionaries. They are both fugitives (although for different reasons). Both of them seek out representatives of the official power, in order to implant their doctrine. The same qualities are attributed to both of them: pseudo-prophet, false apostle, Satan’s accomplice. Both of them are given to fraud. They are both said to claim to be God or equal to God. The unfortunate “flight” of Terebinthus is also mentioned, but Scopello fails to follow up this line. (These motifs are discussed on pages 77-8 of Scopello’s article).

the motif of Helena; the divine birth; the completion of an Unholy Trinity between Scythianus, Terebinthus and Mani; the structural similarities (romance elements, repeated debates) between the *Acta*, the apocryphal Acts and the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones*; and finally a great number of similar motifs concerning the debates in all these works. These findings seem to prove that such similarities were not mere coincidences: they suggest that they were the result of consciously using the Simonian literature as a literary model both for the whole *Acta Archelai* and for drawing the figure of the "teachers" of Mani, and through them of Mani himself.

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